

The Knitting Grannies and the disappearing dog. Chapter 7

With nourishing soup in the thermos flask and tasty sandwiches wrapped in tinfoil, Bluebell packed it all into her backpack along with some other bits and bobs from her store cupboard plus a big carrot for you know who! Midnight, having devoured his sardine treat with relish, washed his whiskers and then went to wait for everyone to put on their winter coats, boots and of course, check they had face masks in their pockets. I grabbed Frankie's collar from the front room and then nipped back next door to pick up his lead, and by the time I had done that, the Grannies plus their cat were already half way up the road! Thanks for waiting!

We must have looked a strange little bunch as we walked along the Limpsfield Road and turned into Crewes Lane.

It was easy to find the house we wanted from Midnight's description, for it really was in need of a good spruce up, especially in the garden which resembled a miniature jungle hiding behind a very tall thick evergreen hedge that must block out any view of the street, as well as light from the street lamp and any sun that might pop through on a dry day! Gertie marched as quickly as she could, which to be honest wasn't that quick at all due to the trailing weeds and brambles that seemed to grab at our ankles in a bid to trip us up! Once she reached the house, she ordered us to put on our face masks and then knocked smartly on the door. Immediate barking could be heard from inside and there was no doubt at all who was making all the noise! Despite waiting and despite the noise that Frankie was making, no one answered the door. Gertie huffed and knocked again but that only made Frankie bark louder! Losing her patience (she hasn't got much at the best of times), she bent down and lifted the flap of the letterbox and called

"Open this door at once, do you hear me! We know you are in there!"

"GERTIE! STOP!" said Bluebell urgently. "You will frighten the life out of her and all you are doing is winding Frankie up! "

"If you know so much, you try!" huffed Gertie and moved out of the way.

Bluebell bent down and spoke.

"Hello dear, can you hear me? Don't be scared, it's OK, everything is going to be fine. I can hear you dear Frankie, you need to stop barking there's a good lad. We are so glad you found him and have been keeping him safe for us. He managed to escape from the garden you know and we have been that worried about him and have been searching everywhere, it's so wonderful you rescued him and kept him safe."

Gertie stared open mouthed at all these untruths! Petunia leaned over to her and whispered "Bella knows what she is doing Gertie, trust her. This lady will feel backed into a corner with no way out because she knows what she did was wrong and Bella is giving her a way to out that saves her pride. Shh! listen, someone is coming!"

Sure enough, there were footsteps approaching and the sound of the key turning in the lock. Slowly the door half opened to reveal the very frightened face of our old lady.

"Oh, my dear, we can't thank you enough" continued Bluebell, "May we come in, it's dreadfully cold out here and all your warm air is escaping!"

As she was speaking she slowly and carefully stepped through the front door.

"I'm Bluebell and this is Gertie and Petunia and this is Frankie's Mum, sorry about the face masks they look very scary don't they but we have to wear them I am afraid. I promise you, we aren't a bit frightening really. Where is the lovely boy, look, I have a big carrot for him!" Bluebell continued, all the while assertively and gently moving forward giving the old lady no choice but to follow!

"This must be the kitchen, is he in here? Oh, Frankie lad are we pleased to see you!" exclaimed Bluebell as one black very excited Labrador launched himself at her and then all of us in turn, dancing around like he was on a pogo stick!

"Now, now Frankie, look what I've bought you" carried on Bluebell as she took off her backpack and found the carrot. Frankie snatched it from her and retreated under the kitchen table where loud crunching noises could be heard.

The old lady was standing looking very discombobulated! Bluebell guided her to a kitchen chair. I think if her eyes could spin round like they do in cartoons, they would be whizzing fit to bust!

"My goodness what a lovely kitchen" carried on Bluebell (it wasn't!) "do you mind if we stop and unpack our tea? We've been so busy searching for Frankie that we decided to pack it like a picnic and eat it when we had the chance and I don't know about you ladies, but I am starving. You must share some dear. Oh! We will have to take our masks off but needs must I suppose! I'm so sorry dear, you did tell us your name (she hadn't) but I've clean forgotten it, can you remind me?"

"Dorothea Redbridge" said the lady in a small cracked voice that seemed rusty from not being used.

"What a lovely name!" smiled Bluebell, all the while unpacking the picnic and laying it out on the table. Unbidden Petunia had quietly searched the kitchen for some mugs and handed them to the Blue haired Granny who poured in the steaming Tomato soup and handed it round.

"There we are everyone, sit down, but spread yourselves around the table, don't sit too close! There are cheese and pickle sandwiches to follow, I'll hand them round as well so we have everything we need! Lovely!" Bluebell beamed round at everyone!

As Dorothea drank her soup, colour seemed to return to her cheeks. She didn't seem to realise that the rest of us only had a small amount of soup to drink and most of the sandwiches were hers. We all played along though so that she wouldn't feel uncomfortable.

As she was drinking there was a loud bang at the back door, Petunia got up to open it and Midnight strolled in, headed straight for Dorothea, jumped on her lap and bumped his head against her chin before turning around three times and settling himself down, purring loudly!

Two fat tears rolled down Dorothea's face.

"You are all being so kind to me!" she cried. "I don't deserve it! Frankie didn't escape from the garden..... I took him! Please don't call the Police!" She burst out it to a storm of crying.

"Hush now dear, everything will be fine, Of course we won't call the Police, shhhhh!" Bluebell cradled Dorothea in her arms, rubbing her gently on the back as if comforting a small child. Gradually the sobs began to subside until there were only occasional hiccups as the old lady responded to the kindness.

Petunia quietly got up and hunted round the kitchen until she found all she needed to make tea. With a steaming cup in front of her, Bluebells reassuring arm around her shoulders and the cat still purring on her lap, Dorothea gave a shuddering sigh as the last of the storm of tears dissipated.

"If you think you can manage it, why don't you tell us your story Dorothea?" encouraged Gertie in the kindest voice I have ever heard her use.

To be continued.....